

Heathrow Community Noise Forum

Meeting notes (27 January 2021, 13:00 – 15:00, Microsoft Teams)

Confirmed attendees

Name	Borough / Organisation
Cllr Chris Turrell	Bracknell Forest Council
Steve Braund	Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Dr Wendy Matthews	Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Linda Burke	London Borough of Ealing
Surinderpal Suri	London Borough of Ealing
Paul Baker	London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
John Coates	London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
Cllr David Hilton	Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Sue Janota	Surrey County Council
Cllr Peter Szanto	Surrey County Council
Margaret Majumdar	Ealing Aircraft Noise Action Group (EANAG)
Paul Conway	Englefield Green Action Group (EGAG)
Robert Buick	Englefield Green Action Group (EGAG)
Bob McLellan	Englefield Green Action Group (EGAG)
Nigel Davies	Englefield Green Action Group (EGAG)
Christine Taylor	HASRA
Paul Beckford	HACAN
Bridget Bell	Plane Hell Action
Graham Young	Richings Park Residents Association
Peter Willan	Richmond Heathrow Campaign
Stephen Clark	Teddington Action Group (TAG)
Dave Gilbert	Teddington Action Group (TAG)
Tina Richardson	The Windlesham Society
Spencer Norton	British Airways
Ian Greene	DfT
Gary Marshall	DfT
Ian Jopson	NATS
Rupert Basham	ICCAN
Kjeld Vinkx	To70
Becky Coffin	Heathrow
Jennifer Sykes	Heathrow
Michael Glen	Heathrow
Rick Norman	Heathrow
Laura Jones	Heathrow
Richard West	Heathrow
David Knights	Heathrow

Apologies

Name	Borough / Organisation
Tim Walker	Forest Hill Society
Darren Rhodes	CAA

1 Welcome and apologies for absence

- 1.1 Becky Coffin (BC), Director of Communities and Sustainability at Heathrow, welcomed members to the virtual forum. She noted apologies for absence and welcomed new member Paul Beckford who has taken over from John Stewart as coordinator of HACAN.
- 1.2 BC advised that unfortunately more colleagues would be leaving the business due to the continuing impacts of COVID-19, including a number from her team. Bob McLellan (BM) asked who had left so far. BC mentioned former Head of Sustainability George Davies, and Laura Jones (LJ) added that a number of colleagues from the Airspace and Operations teams had left the business including former HCNF attendees Jane Dawes, Rachel Thomas and Pete Rafano.
- 1.3 BC ran through the actions from the previous meeting which took place on 21 October 2020. These are detailed below.
- 1.4 **Find out if Hong Kong has a restriction on departure times (3.13).** BC explained that it had been difficult to source information on Hong Kong's current capacity and restrictions, as a number of Heathrow's former aviation contacts around the world were not available as a result of Covid-19. She advised that there was a useful link on Hong Kong's Civil Aviation Department website ([here](#)) which provides details of some of the usual night-time mitigation measures in place. She advised that Heathrow would continue to evaluate any opportunities for minimising early morning arrivals, albeit recognising that airlines have historic legal rights to continue to use the slots that they have held. Robert Buick (RB) noted that the rationale behind the question was that 04:30 was a very early time to have flights arriving from Hong Kong. Dave Gilbert (DG) asked if the question could remain on the agenda. RN confirmed that he would be happy to pick this up as and when contacts start filtering back into Hong Kong. **ACTION RN**
- 1.5 **Confirm whether Heathrow will produce Noise Action Plan noise contours (3.15).** The 2019 contours have been prepared and will be published once they have been verified internally and with the CAA. The 2020 contours will need to be discussed with the CAA to determine the best approach.
- 1.6 **Determine the best way forward for the To70 departure noise study (6.2).** Kjeld Vinkx (KV) from To70 will be presenting this work later in the community slot.
- 1.7 **Find out if the acoustic pen was used for an engine ground run on 15 September (7.2).** This was followed up by the team and confirmed and communicated by email on 6 November 2020.
- 1.8 **CAA to advise on the publication of SoNA Night (7.7).** The CAA advised that it will be published this year following the DfT's peer review.

2 Business Update

- 2.1 BC provided an update on the current situation at Heathrow. She advised that Covid-19 has been the worst crisis to ever hit the aviation sector, with Heathrow's costs exceeding its revenues by £5m each day. With travel restrictions changing weekly and successive waves of the virus on the horizon, a rapid recovery is highly unlikely. She added that keeping everyone safe remained Heathrow's top priority.

- 2.2 Heathrow has had to adapt to a new operating reality as it faced a 72.7% drop in passengers in 2020, with lockdowns and border closures leading to a loss of 58.8 million passengers. December figures showed an 82.9% drop in passengers compared to the same time last year, as a new strain of Covid-19 took its toll on air travel. Cargo volumes in 2020 fell 28.2% because of the impact of travel restrictions on international trade. Prior to the pandemic, 94% of cargo travelled in the belly hold of passenger planes, which have been severely reduced.
- 2.3 BC provided an update on Heathrow's expansion plans. She recapped that following the Court of Appeal's decision to overturn the Airports National Policy Statement last February, the Supreme Court had overturned that decision in December 2020, resulting in Heathrow's plans once more being supported by Government policy. She explained that expansion continues to be part of the airport's long-term plans, but the current focus has to be recovery from Covid-19. She acknowledged that communities want certainty about expansion, but that first Heathrow needs to ensure it can recover from the Covid-19 pandemic in order to continue to support jobs and businesses in the local community. However, passenger demand will eventually return to pre-pandemic levels, and when it does the need for a third runway will surface again. Heathrow will now consult with its Board and investors, the Government, its airline customers and regulators on its next steps.
- 2.4 Peter Willan (PW) asked if the next forum could include a discussion on airspace modernisation and Performance Based Navigation (PBN). **ACTION RW**
- 2.5 PW asked if Heathrow would receive finance from the Government to implement its airspace modernisation programme. BC acknowledged that funding was a challenge. She noted that an application had been made by the Airspace Change Organising Group (ACOG) but understood that no confirmation had yet been received on whether funding would be available. Bob McLellan (BM) suggested (via meeting chat) that independent funding of community groups was also required.
- 2.6 Cllr David Hilton (DH) suggested that the use of virtual meetings would cause business travel to decline and asked how quickly Heathrow expected to return to 2019 passenger numbers. BC expected that this would not happen until at least 2023, noting that Heathrow's latest forecast which was published with the December investor reports provided more detail (available [here](#)).

3 Operational Update

- 3.1 Jennifer Sykes (JS), Michael Glen (MG) and Dave Knights (DK) gave an overview of Heathrow's operations. She advised that it continues to be a challenging time for Heathrow's operations team despite the lower traffic numbers, including response to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and changing traffic patterns. She recapped that Heathrow had returned to Single Runway Operations (SRO) on 1 January. She noted that Heathrow had successfully managed the recent strike action and snowfall thanks to the contingencies that were in place.
- 3.2 JS referred to the Government's airspace modernisation programme, noting there remained a need for modernisation with or without Heathrow expansion. Heathrow is required through law to complete airspace modernisation by 2030. The airport is forming its plans and expects to provide an update in the next couple of months.

- 3.3 Stephen Clark (SC) asked how Heathrow would factor in the lessons learned from Performance Based Navigation (PBN) implementation in the US. JS advised that Heathrow would follow the CAA's airspace change guidance CAP1616 which includes engaging with the population and considering design principles to look at the different ways PBN can be implemented. She added that the industry should also discuss the best way forward on this. SC asked how airspace modernisation would fit in with Heathrow expansion. JS echoed BC's earlier comments that Heathrow would be discussing the best way forward with its stakeholders, so those discussions needed to take place first.
- 3.4 Surinderpal Suri (SS) understood that one of the core principles behind PBN was to adapt to new capacity and questioned the need for it if passenger numbers were not expected to recover for a while. JS explained that the requirement to modernise UK airspace still remained, and that while capacity was one driver there were also others including noise, carbon and infrastructure which is reaching end of life and needs to be modernised.
- 3.5 Bridget Bell (BB) asked who had mandated PBN to be introduced. PW responded that it was a 2009 requirement by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for all airports in the world to introduce PBN. JS added (via meeting chat) that a summary is provided on the CAA website [here](#).
- 3.6 RB recalled that consultants Taylor Airey had held a good PBN workshop. PW added that they had prepared a report and asked if they could come and present it at the HCNF. JS confirmed that she would look into this. **ACTION JS**
- 3.7 MG presented a chart showing the number of daily traffic movements since November, indicating a small rise in numbers in December which had led to the airport returning to normal two runway operations on 14 December before reverting to SRO on 1 January. He advised that the peak daily number of departures and arrivals for December was 642 and the lowest was 208 on Christmas Day, which is always traditionally lower than other days.
- 3.8 SS asked how the move to SRO had affected noise levels around the airport and if the balance had shifted towards westerly operations. MG explained that the direction of operation at Heathrow was dictated by the weather and was typically around 70% westerly and 30% easterly. RN added (via meeting chat) that Heathrow had not done any noise contouring of the impacts from the change in operations through 2020, this would come through when Heathrow works up its approach to the 2020 contour report.
- 3.9 MG presented a chart showing the monthly numbers of late running flights and early morning arrivals in 2020 compared to 2019, noting the large reduction due to reduced total movements. He explained that the number of early morning arrivals had dropped from around 16 to typically 5 or 6. The few remaining late departures were mostly due to technical issues, with a few caused by the effects of Covid-19.
- 3.10 BB asked which airlines had historic rights to the early morning time slots. MG explained that slots were handled by a third-party company called Airport Coordination Limited (ACL) and he would see what he could find out. **ACTION MG**
- 3.11 RB observed that he had recently noticed some Boeing 787 flights not staying within the westerly MID departure route. MG agreed to investigate. **ACTION MG**

- 3.12 DK presented an update on the proposed introduction of Slight Steeper Approaches (SSA) at Heathrow. He explained that trials had taken place in 2015 and 2017 to ascertain the effects of increasing the angle of some of the final approach paths into Heathrow from 3.0° to 3.2°. The trials had identified a small noise benefit and Heathrow was planning to implement the procedure in December 2021 with a consultation planned from 5 March to 2 April 2021 subject to CAA approval.
- 3.13 PW asked if this would affect the position where aircraft join the final approach. MG responded (via meeting chat) that the trials indicated that the joining point statistics were not adversely affected and remained comparable to the equivalent 3.0° approach for aircraft that use the method of approach.
- 3.14 BB asked if this would affect the descent angle of aircraft prior to joining the final approach. RN clarified that there would be no change in procedure for aircraft between the holding stacks and the final approach.
- 3.15 DK presented slides explaining that NATS were planning to decommission 27 ground-based navigational beacons, known as navigational aids. He explained that the beacons assist an aircraft by guiding it to its destination. However, most aircraft now use satellite navigation technology and have done for many years, so the beacons are rarely used. Heathrow needs to produce alternative procedures and plans to enable future use of the current routes utilising the same methods within the aircraft's on-board computer (Flight Management System) as today.
- 3.16 PW asked if this was PBN and whether it would cause more concentrated flight paths. JS explained that it was not replication using PBN and while the project has not yet initiated, with current information the flight paths over the ground would be expected to look the same as they do today after the change. DK explained that the procedure was called RNAV substitution. DH responded (via meeting chat) that he believed RNAV had been used for some time and that was why people had begun complaining about departure routes becoming more concentrated.
- 3.17 RN clarified (via meeting chat) that the on-board flight management systems have been coding the flight paths since the 1990s - in effect this means that for an individual airline and aircraft type there has been a very consistent track as a result. The dispersion that is currently seen is the result of different suppliers and aircraft types coding the routes slightly differently – for the near-term mitigation of the beacon removal Heathrow is looking to start a project to enable these current procedures to remain. Essentially the difference with future airspace modernisation PBN defined routes is that the coding will become more consistent.
- 3.18 BC noted that it was a complicated area. She confirmed that further information would be provided at a later date and there would be more opportunity to discuss the topic so that any concerns could be allayed.

4 Night Flight Consultation

- 4.1 Gary Marshall (DfT) gave a presentation on the Government's night flight restrictions consultation that was published on 2 December. He explained that it has two main purposes. Firstly, to consult on the proposal to maintain existing night flight restrictions from 2022 to 2024 and the proposal to ban QC4 rated aircraft movements between 11:30pm and 6am. And secondly, to acquire early views and evidence about future night flight policy both at the designated airports and nationally beyond 2024.

- 4.2 RN expressed concern at the amount of time needed. He welcomed a fundamental review of night restrictions and supported an outcome-based solution but highlighted the rigour of the requirements of European Regulation EU598 and the timeline need for this to be properly implemented. He also wanted to understand the DfT's objective.
- 4.3 GM noted that the DfT had extended the timeline for the longer-term reforms but appreciated that it was still quite a stringent timetable and would feed RN's comments back to the DfT. He added that engagement with stakeholders would continue beyond the closing date and that the possibility of a further consultation was being discussed.
- 4.4 PW felt there was no economic case for night flights. GM replied that he was sure the airlines and airports would have a different view and the job was to find that balance.
- 4.5 RB stated (via meeting chat) that given the consultation closes on 3 March, the SoNA Night publication would surely constitute an essential missing input to a proper valid consultation so the deadline should be extended until SoNA Night is available. Ian Greene (IG) advised that SoNA Night is expected to be published within the next couple of months and will be going through a second round of peer reviewing next month. It will therefore be able to form part of the evidence for consideration in responding to the second part of the consultation on longer term restrictions, and that is one reason that DfT have extended the consultation period. Due to legal time constraints, DfT cannot extend the element of the consultation relating to restrictions from October 2022 without risking the existing restrictions expiring without further restrictions being in place.
- 4.6 BC withdrew her slot on Heathrow's Forums and Meetings Consultation to allow more time for KV's presentation.

5 Departure Noise Study

- 5.1 KV presented the preliminary results of a departure noise study that he had undertaken on behalf of the HCNF community groups while in his former role as independent technical advisor to the forum.
- 5.2 KV explained that the objective of the study was to reduce departure noise based on maximum noise levels (LA_{max}) as much as possible for the largest population (and Sound Exposure Level (SEL) where possible), while minimising negative effects including increased noise, NO_x and fuel burn. Preliminary results showed a significant potential to reduce departure noise for A320 aircraft by changing from departure procedure NADP2 to NADP1 and preferably increasing the acceleration height. Further reductions in noise were also possible by increasing take-off thrust. He noted that the subject was complex due to the number of different aircraft types and routes at Heathrow, so more study was needed.
- 5.3 Spencer Norton (SN) thanked KV for the presentation and raised a number of questions (via meeting chat). He noted that the study only looked at the DET route on runway 09R and suggested that as 09R is only used for 30% of the year 27L/R would have been more suitable. In addition, he would like to see who was adversely affected by NADP1 compared to NADP2, noting that there would be winners and losers and that NADP1 was not a silver bullet. He advised that full thrust take-off as mandated was not done anywhere in the world and would not be tolerated by any airline, so he suggested this data should be omitted from the study. He also added that a tapered derated climb affects climb rates higher up, so that should also be discounted. He observed that an acceleration above 3,000ft is not usual for NADP1 and that as the NPRs are only valid up to 4,000ft this would cause issues. He also noted the absence of any carbon disbenefits in the presentation which he expected would be large.

- 5.4 DH noted (via meeting chat) that the study needed more time, including looking at the optimum procedures for other aircraft as there can only be two operational procedures, so what is chosen must work for all. He added that this would need a change of heart from operators towards using higher thrust on take-off.
- 5.5 PC suggested a follow-up meeting to allow time to discuss the study in more detail. RN confirmed that he would set up a meeting and also invite Darren Rhodes from CAA who was keen to be involved in this discussion. **ACTION RN**

6 AOB

- 6.1 CT expressed disappointment (via meeting chat) in the forum format, observing that it was hard to hear the questions and responses while having to make comments in the meeting chat.
- 6.2 Paul Beckford (PB) asked if Heathrow still intended to introduce Independent Parallel Approaches (IPA), and if so, what the expected timeline was. JS responded that IPA, along with other airspace changes apart from slightly steeper approaches, remained paused and was part of Heathrow's review of how to take airspace forward.
- 6.3 PB asked to see a chart reflecting the organisational changes at Heathrow. This is attached to the meeting notes.